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LeMond not sure Armstrong's clean

/ Associated Press
Posted: 26 minutes ago

Three-time Tour de France winner Greg LeMond suggested he's not convinced Lance Armstrong is so clean.

"Lance is ready to do anything to keep his secret," LeMond told France's Le Monde newspaper in an interview published Thursday.

"I don't know how he can continue to convince everybody of his innocence," the daily quoted Lemond as saying. Fellow American LeMond who won the Tour in 1986, 1989 and 1990.

Armstrong, who has won five Tours and is seeking a record sixth crown, has repeatedly denied doping accusations.

This is not the first time Le Monde newspaper has leveled doping accusations against Armstrong, and his team manager Johan Bruyneel said he wasn't surprised.

"Le Monde is a newspaper whose intentions we know. And if I can make a suggestion to the editor it would be that they change their sports and cycling pages into a doping page."

"There's nothing we can do to counter it," Bruyneel said.

Armstrong entered the Tour shadowed by a new book, "L.A. Confidential, The Secrets of Lance Armstrong," that insinuates he probably has used drugs. The French-language book by journalists Pierre Ballester and David Walsh hit stores less than three weeks before the start of the race.

"I was a big supporter of Lance the first year that he won the Tour," LeMond was quoted as saying. "But with all these stories it's difficult to stay a supporter."

LANCE SHOOTS FOR SIX ...

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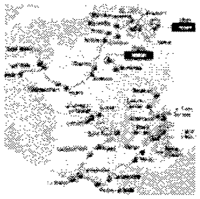

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EXPERTS

LeMond Blasts Armstrong

By Joe Lindsey, Contributing Writer
July 15, 2004

In what is the closest any American has come to directly accusing Lance Armstrong of using performance-enhancing substances, three-time Tour de France winner Greg LeMond publicly questioned Armstrong's cleanliness, saying that denials and negative tests were not clear proof that he is clean.

Stage 11

- Minutes
- Daily Reports
- Info & Map

"Everybody says that," LeMond said in an interview printed today in the French daily newspaper Le Monde. "But neither had David Millar tested positive and he now admits he took EPO."

Millar, formerly of the Cofidis team, was taken into custody last month when a police search of his home turned up vials of Eprex, a form of EPO. His lawyer acknowledged that Millar admits to having used EPO three times in his career. Millar had previously denied all allegations of drug use, calling his accuser, former teammate Philippe Gaumont, a "nutter" and pointing out that he had never failed a drug test.

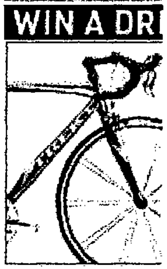
LeMond has publicly questioned Armstrong before. In 2001, when London Times writer David Walsh revealed that Armstrong was consulting with Dr. Michele Ferrari, who is currently on trial in Italy for allegedly helping cyclists dope, LeMond was characteristically blunt. "If it's true, then [Armstrong's Tour wins] are the greatest fraud in cycling," he said at the time.

Armstrong, reportedly non-plussed by LeMond's comments, had a phone conversation with Greg that is recounted in Walsh's new book, "LA Confidential: The Secrets of Lance Armstrong" currently on newsstands in France. In the book, LeMond's wife Kathy tells Walsh of the conversation, in which Armstrong pressures LeMond to admit to taking EPO himself; Greg denies ever having used the drug.

Le Monde, a daily published in the southern part of France, has been a dogged pursuer of doping scandals. Its report last week that some riders in the Tour remain under investigation for doping led to the rest-day expulsion of Martin Hvastija and Stefano Casagranda.

And in 1999, when it was revealed Armstrong tested positive for a corticosteroid after denying it, he had a tense exchange at a press conference with a Le Monde reporter who asked him whether he was truthful in his denial or if he had used a corticoid. "So, Mr. Le Monde," Armstrong shot back, "Are you calling me a liar, or are you calling me a doper?" Armstrong's team produced a medical certificate for the product, a topical cream, and he was never sanctioned. In LA Confidential, Walsh asserts, through former Postal soigneur Emma O'Reilly, that the certificate was produced after the fact as a cover.

In his strongest words yet, LeMond blasted Armstrong, saying, "The problem with Lance is that you're either a liar or



you're out to destroy cycling," he told Le Monde, referring to how Armstrong reacts to riders like Filippo Simeoni, Christophe Bassons or Jesus Manzano, who acknowledge doping in the sport. "Lance is ready to do anything to keep his secret but I don't know how long he can convince everybody of his innocence." Simeoni has sued Armstrong for slander, saying that Armstrong damaged his reputation by calling Simeoni a liar when he testified against Ferrari at the doctor's last trial.

LeMond dismissed criticisms that he is jealous of Armstrong, who has won two more Tours than him and stands to become the first-ever to win six.

"Because of all that has occurred in the past 10 years," he said, referencing doping, "that does not have the same value as the five Tours of Hinault, for example."

As of press time, Armstrong had not yet responded to the comments.

-With AFP Reports

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CARLOS CHAVEZ *Los Angeles Times*

AN OLD PRO: *Andre Agassi dipped into his bag of tricks in the second set and went on to defeat Julien Benneteau.*

TENNIS

Agassi Remains True to Form

By PETER YOON
Times Staff Writer

Andre Agassi, using a couple of well-timed drop shots, survived a first-set scare from a little-known Frenchman Thursday night and prevented the Mercedes-Benz Cup from becoming an afterthought.

Top-seeded Agassi fought off hard-hitting Julien Benneteau, 7-6 (7-4), 6-2, in front of a sellout crowd of 6,872 at the Los Angeles Tennis Center at UCLA and became one of only two seeded players to advance to the quarterfinals.

Second-seeded Paradorn Srichaphan lost, 7-5, 7-4, to Jeff Morrison, and fifth-seeded Sjeng Schalken lost, 7-6 (7-5), 2-6, 7-5, to Wesley Moodie, adding their names to a list of four seeded players who lost in the first round.

"I think everybody goes out on the court and expects difficulties," Agassi said. "There's not a match you can take for granted. You just hope you're one of the fortunate ones."

The tournament already lost several recognizable names because of pre-tournament withdrawals and certainly would have lost some luster with an Agassi loss. Mardy Fish, seeded third, is the only other seeded player left.

Agassi, a three-time winner of the Mercedes-Benz Cup, has advanced to the quarterfinals in eight of his nine appearances at the tournament.

The decidedly pro-Agassi crowd, the first sellout of the week, made no secret about its allegiance to one of the most popular players of this generation.

"I've definitely had the privilege of having a lot of support in a lot of places," Agassi said. "But I'm very familiar with these courts and it is an extra special feeling, no question."

Benneteau played shot-for-shot with Agassi during the first set of a battle of baseline bashers. He used an aggressive, free-swinging approach and found the lines and the corners, but in the second set those shots missed.

Agassi hit two perfect drop shots in the first game of the second set to get Benneteau thinking and the strategy worked. Agassi broke in that game and not expect that."

Agassi will play Tommy Haas, who missed all of last season recovering from shoulder surgery, but had little trouble in a 6-2, 6-0 victory over Kenneth Carlsen.

Srichaphan, ranked No. 23 in the world, was steamrolled by a powerful Morrison serve that produced 18 aces. Srichaphan had only one break point opportunity in the match and Morrison saved it with an ace.

"He played great today, especially his service game," Srichaphan said. "When he had trouble he just got away with it because of his serve."

Morrison, ranked No. 117 in the world, advanced to the quarterfinals for the second consecutive week and should crack the top 100. He said the upsets this week demonstrate that rankings lose relevance on the court.

"I think that there are some really, really good tennis players that aren't household names, but can knock off top-ranked players on certain days," he said. "No matter whether you're ranked No. 1 or 100, you know that going out that you've got a chance and that the other guy has got a chance."

Morrison will play Moodie in the quarterfinals. Moodie, ranked No. 133 in the world, upset No. 25 Schalken, a quarterfinalist at Wimbledon the past three years and a U.S. Open semifinalist in 2002.

"I'm very happy with the win, but these type of players are players I'd like to beat on a more regular basis," Moodie said. "I've had a couple of close losses this year a couple of matches haven't gone my way."

Schalken said his footwork was slow during the match, but did not blame the heat even though the match began at noon

At a Glance

- **What:** Mercedes-Benz Cup.
- **When:** Today through Sunday.
- **Where:** Los Angeles Tennis Center/UCLA.
- **TV:** ESPN2 (2 p.m.); Tennis Channel (4, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.).
- **Tickets:** (310) 825-2101.
- **Today's featured matches:** No. 3 Mardy Fish vs. Cyril Saulnier (2 p.m.); Greg Rusedski vs. Nicolas Kiefer (4 p.m.); No. 1 Andre Agassi vs. Tommy Haas (7:30 p.m.).

Armstrong Vents Some Anger

Five-time champion, responding to latest doping rumors, assails French journalist and shakes head in response to criticism by LeMond.

By DIANE PUCIN
Times Staff Writer

FIGEAC, France — As far as the race goes, Lance Armstrong is confident.

As far as the drug talk goes, Armstrong is spitting mad.

On a day when the temperature climbed to near 100 degrees by the end of Stage 11, Armstrong stood near the finish line and spoke optimistically about the upcoming mountain climbs in the looming Pyrenees and angrily about a two-pronged attack against his reputation.

A furious Armstrong, trying to become the first man in the history of the Tour de France to win the three-week endurance test six times in a row, accused a French television journalist of stalking his hotel room and wearily shook his head at harsh words from Greg LeMond, the first American cyclist to win the Tour.

Armstrong was feeling assailed when he and fellow American Tyler Hamilton were tapped at the end of Stage 10 for drug testing. Making him madder, Armstrong said, was the sight of France 3 TV investigative reporter Hugues Huet at the U.S. Postal Service team hotel Thursday morning.

"After we left [the hotel], the [television] crew went to the hotel, to the reception, to the owner of the hotel, asking for our room list, trying to get in our rooms," Armstrong said. "They show up at the press conference and ask sporting questions to our face but as soon as we leave, they're looking, digging in the rooms, looking for dirt. If you left a B vitamin sitting there, that would be on TV and that would be a scandal.

"This particular guy [Huet] has been following us for months. The scary thing is that if they don't find anything and they get frustrated after a couple of months, well, who's to say they don't put something there and film it and say, 'Look what we've found.' That's what we have to deal with."

A France 3 spokesman said the crew had gone to the hotel only to interview U.S. Postal trainers and assistants to assess the physical state of Armstrong and his teammates before the start of mountain climbing. And Huet told Associated Press: "We do have ethics and we don't do just anything. If I played around by searching his room like that, I would be breaking the limits."

It is not a secret where teams stay. A Tour book lists each team's hotel for each night. But it is unusual for riders to give interviews at the hotel on the morning before the stage begins.

Also Thursday, an article in the French newspaper Le Monde quoted LeMond as strongly criticizing Armstrong's denials of drug use.

"The problem with Lance is that you're either a liar or you're out to destroy cycling," LeMond was quoted as saying. "Lance is ready to do anything to keep his secret but I don't know how long he can convince everybody of his innocence."

Armstrong has had a contentious relationship with the French press in the past. Two years ago, he held an emotional news conference in the middle of the Tour denying doping allegations, expressing sadness that French fans were yelling "Dope" at him and defending his relationship with Italian physician Michele Ferrari, who has been the target of Italian investigations into doping.

And LeMond and Armstrong have had an uneasy relationship since Armstrong won his first Tour in 1999. In 2001, when a London Times writer revealed Armstrong's relationship with Ferrari, LeMond was quoted extensively as being critical of Armstrong and doubting Armstrong's victories.

While neither Armstrong nor other members of the U.S. Postal team responded publicly to LeMond's quotes, Chris Carmichael, Armstrong's trainer, said there was a sense of frustration about the continual percolating of the doping rumors.

"It's disappointing," Carmichael said. "How is Lance supposed to react? He takes every drug test, he's never failed one, guys have been trying for years to catch him, they can't. How do you prove you haven't taken anything other than passing the drug tests?

"It's not a great situation but what happened today isn't a surprise. Lance doesn't expect it to go away, he can only respond."

When it came to talking about his position in the race — still in sixth place, still 9 minutes 35 seconds behind overall leader Thomas Voeckler of France, still at least 47 seconds ahead of his strongest challengers — Armstrong was content.

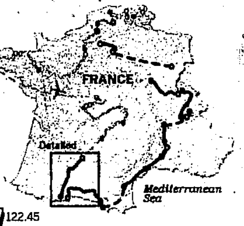
He also said he was looking forward both to today's stage — 122.5 miles from Castelsarrasin to La Mongie that finishes with a daunting eight-mile climb to the finish — and even more to Saturday's 13th stage that finishes high up in the mountains at Plateau de Beille.

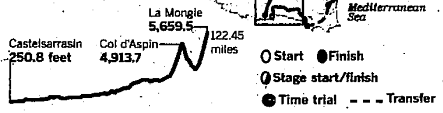
In 2002, Armstrong won stages that finished in La Mongie and Plateau de Beille.

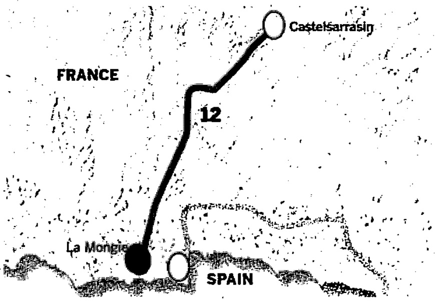
French fans cheered again Thursday. For the first time in a decade, French riders have won back-to-back stages with David Moncoutie of Cofidis finishing alone at the end of the undulating, 102-mile trip. A day earlier, climber Richard Virenque won the first climbing stage.

Tour de France: Today's Stage 12

The first of the Pyrenean stages, it begins at Castelsarrasin with 120 kilometers before the riders hit the Category 1 climb (3,500-5,000 feet) at Col d'Aspin. Then it's all downhill for 12 kilometers before the riders face the next climb, La Mongie, where the finish is held.







Source: Associated Press

Los Angeles Times

Stage 11 at a Glance

- **Stage:** A relatively short ride from Saint-Flour to Figeac over 102 miles of hilly roads with one notable climb.
- **Winner:** David Moncoutie of France in 3 hours 54 minutes 58 seconds.
- **How others fared:** Lance Armstrong, U.S., placed ninth, 5:58 behind. Jan Ullrich, Germany, placed 13th in the same time
- **Yellow jersey:** Thomas Voeckler of France keeps the lead.
- **Quote of the Day:** "We're tired and really cooked." — Lance Armstrong.

OVERALL LEADERS

N. RIDER	Country	Time
1. THOMAS VOECKLER	France	46:43:10
2. STUART O'GRADY	Australia	3:00 behind
3. SANDY CASAR	France	4:13 behind
4. RICHARD VIRENQUE	France	6:52 behind
5. JAKOB PIIL	Denmark	7:43 behind
6. LANCE ARMSTRONG	U.S.	9:35 behind

SEE THE HIGH JUMP